GEOGRAPHIC NEWS BULLETINS

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THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

(The National Geographic Society is a scientific and educational Society, wholly altruistic, incorporated under the Federal law as a non-commercial institution for the increase of geographic knowledge and its popular diffusion.)

General Headquarters, Washington, D. C.

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A BLIND ABYSSINIAN BEGGAR PLAYS ON ONE STRING

(See Bulletin No. 3)

HOW TEACHERS MAY OBTAIN THE BULLETINS

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Andrée Expedition Tragedy Uncovered Near Land Which Has New Name

A NEW name, Fridtjof Nansen Land, has appeared on world maps.

Soon after it got onto the maps it jumped into the newspaper headlines because of the remarkable discovery of the bodies of S. A. Andrée and two companions who died in the Arctic after their attempted balloon flight to the North Pole 33 years ago met with disaster.

The bodies and records were found on White Island, midway between Fridtjof Nansen Land and Svalbard (Spitsbergen). Until a few months ago the former archipelago was called Franz Joseph Land. But the Soviet Government struck out the name of the former Emperor of Austria and substituted the name of the famous Arctic explorer, Fridjtof Nansen.

Its new name fits appropriately because the islands figured in one of the most dramatic episodes of the late Fridtjof Nansen's career as an explorer.

Land Named for Him Saved His Life

The land which has been named for him literally saved his life and preserved him for the valuable humanitarian career that reached a climax when he, in cooperation with Herbert Hoover, succored millions of famine-stricken Russians.

Fridtjof Nansen and a small party on board the specially constructed ship *Fram* entered the ice floes off northern Siberia in 1893 and, locked in the ice pack, drifted for thirty-five months without sighting land and without a single contact with the world. In fact the world believed Nansen and his crew lost.

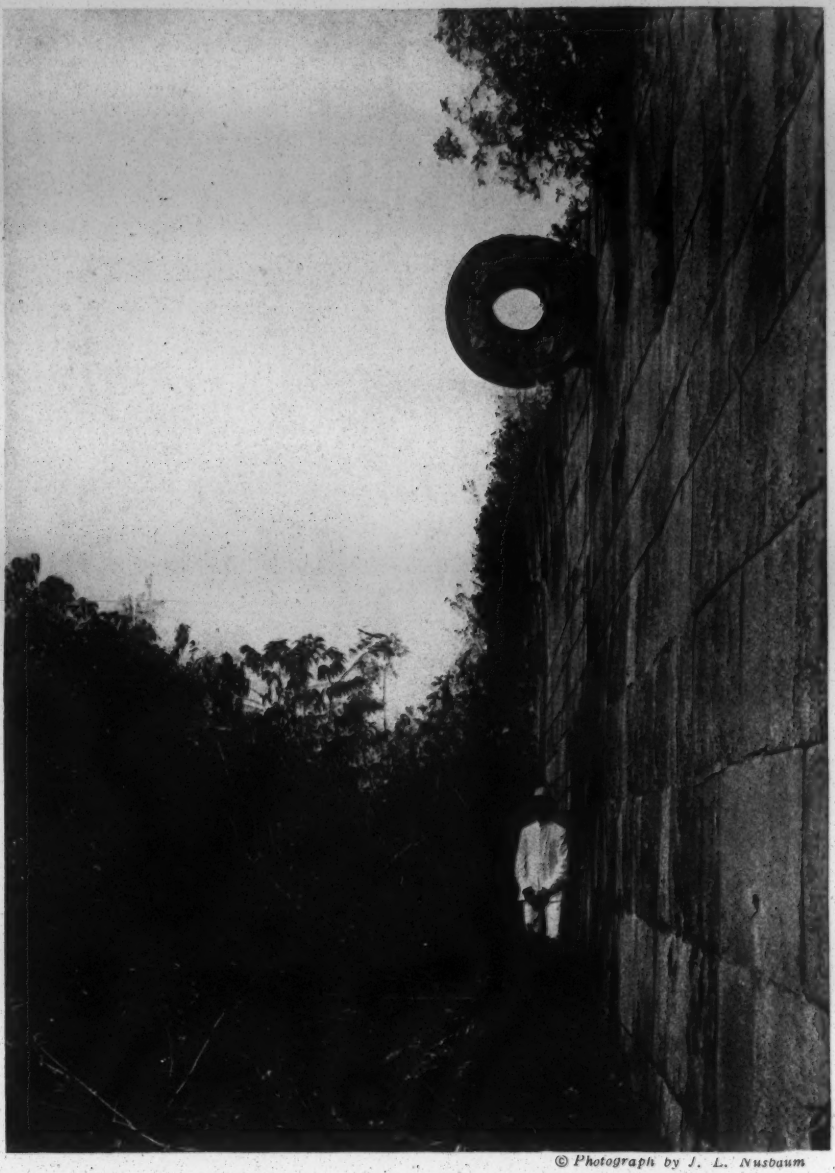
When the *Fram* failed to drift over the North Pole, as Nansen hoped she would, the explorer conceived a daring two-man dash to the top of the world. Nansen and Johansen with three sledges, 22 dogs and two kayaks (Eskimo canoes), did not attain their objective, but they made a new "farthest north," latitude 86 degrees and 12 minutes, just 228 miles from the Pole. Turning south, the two men started on one of the longest marches ever made over Arctic ice. Finally they were reduced to two dogs. Johansen was struck down by a hungry bear but he escaped death.

Walrus Drives Tusks Through Nansen's Frail Craft

At last they reached Eva Island, one of the outlying islands of what now becomes Fridtjof Nansen Land. There they built a stone hut and lived chiefly on bear meat during the entire winter. In the spring they started south for the main islands of the group. Once a huge walrus drove its tusks through Nansen's fragile kayak, but Nansen scrambled out to safety on a cake of ice as the tiny canoe filled with water.

While the two explorers were shaping their plans to reach civilization by a long, dangerous sea trip to Novaya Zemla, Nansen thought he heard a dog bark. He went off to investigate. To his great joy he met Frederick Jackson, leader of an English expedition. Although Jackson had known Nansen years before, he failed, for the moment, to recognize in the bearded, black-skinned, sooty-haired wanderer the famous blonde Norwegian explorer. Nansen and Johansen came home on the English party's whaler; the *Fram* arrived a few days later. Nansen, who had been given up for dead, received a jovous welcome.

It is easy to recognize the nationality of expeditions that have explored



© Photograph by J. L. Nusbaum

THE "BASKET" OF AN ANCIENT MAYA BASKET-BALL COURT

The Tlachtli field, where a game not unlike the modern game of basket-ball was played, is composed of two massive parallel stone walls 119 feet apart, 28 feet high, 39 feet thick at the base, and 272 feet long. At each open end stands a temple, and the whole area is as large as a modern football field. In the middle of each wall, 24 feet above the level of the court and directly opposite each other, is a stone ring. The object of the game was to drive a solid rubber ball through this hole, a difficult feat, since the player had to stand close to the wall when he attempted this, otherwise he could not get it through the hole (See Bulletin No. 4).

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Wheat, Caviar and Isinglass

LARGE exports of wheat from the land of the Soviets, the first extensive exports since before the World War, have affected grain prices in the United States and abroad.

Wheat thus takes its place in an already impressive list of Soviet exports, some of which reach the United States: manganese for steel-making, platinum for jewelry and laboratory equipment, goat skins, and caviar.

Preserved sturgeon eggs, popularly known as caviar, are one of the most valuable products of Soviet fisheries, all of which have been merged into one huge, national, government-controlled trust.

The United States imported 300 tons of Russian caviar last year, for which Americans paid more than $600,000.

Caviar for Cotton, Manganese for Tractors

All of it was sold through the Amtorg, which is the Soviet Government's trading corporation in New York City. The caviar trade has been pushed vigorously because the Soviet Government needs that $600,000 and much more money to pay for the tons of cotton, the tractors, the electrical machinery and other commodities which it purchases in large quantities in the United States.

Huge, sluggish sturgeon that are helping the U. S. S. R. (the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) to buy Southern cotton, inhabit the mouths of the Volga, the Caspian Sea, the Black Sea, and various rivers running into these seas. They are the largest of fresh water fish. Authenticated, true, scientifically accepted fish stories from the Volga report that sturgeon have been caught that measured 25 feet in length and weighed 3,000 pounds!

One-Third the Weight of the Fish May Be in Eggs

Only female sturgeons are highly valuable because it is the fish eggs which fishermen chiefly seek. Enormous quantities of roe are found in a single fish; the egg mass may account for one-third the entire weight.

To catch the sturgeon the fishermen drive stakes and set their nets in the form of large weirs, like eel weirs on a big scale. Bouncing bobbers warn that a fish swimming up-river to spawn has entered a trap.

Having made his catch, the fisherman sails through the dismal reaches of the lower Volga to Astrakhan, the caviar capital. Practically all the caviar that comes to the United States is packed in this island city 72 feet below sea level. The Caspian Sea into which the Volga drains is 85 feet below sea level.

Sturgeon Also Source of Isinglass Used for India Ink

Once the catch has been brought to the wharf the sturgeon is immediately cut open and the roe emptied into a sieve through which the eggs fall. The sturgeon eggs are submerged for a few minutes in a brine, which acts as a preservative, and then packed in barrels for shipment abroad. Bulk shipments are usually put up in the small cans that decorate delicatessen shelves, after the caviar arrives in New York.

Sturgeons, like sharks, are very old fish in the history of the world. Their armored backs and sides make them a curious survival in the waters. Like the

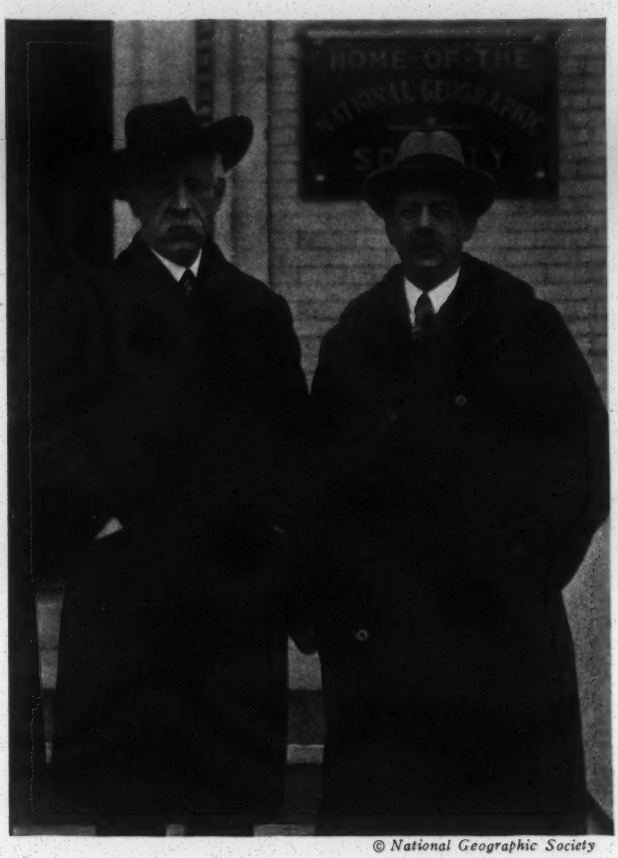
UMI

Fridtjof Nansen Land as well as the period of their work by merely reading the map: British Channel, Alexandra Island, Harmsworth Straits, Cambridge Bay, Wilczek Island, Wayprecht Sea, Crown Prince Rudolf Land, Pierpont Morgan Strait, Vanderbilt Sound, Graham Bell Island, Whitney Sea. Austrians, English, Americans, Norwegians, and Italians have shared in making known the secrets of this ice-bound archipelago.

Thirty of the islands in the group are 10 miles or more in length, and the remainder, scores of them, are small. Several are as much as 50 miles long. As a whole the group lies slightly farther north than Svalbard (Spitsbergen), and it is as far north of the Murman coast of Soviet Russia as Chicago is from New Orleans.

Because of its far northern position and the greater distance the Arctic arm of the Gulf Stream must flow to reach it, Fridtjof Nansen Land is marked by Arctic conditions to a greater extent than Svalbard. It is called "the world's most characteristic polar land." Most of the islands are plateaus under 1,000 feet elevation and covered with domes of ice. Even in summer less than 5 per cent of the surface is free of snow.

Bulletin No. 1, October 20, 1930.



© *National Geographic Society*

DR. FRIDTJOF NANSEN (LEFT) WITH DR. GILBERT GROSVENOR

This photograph of the famous Norwegian explorer with the President of the National Geographic Society was taken on the occasion of Nansen's visit to Washington shortly before his death.

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Ethiopian King Will Wear 18 Lion Manes at Coronation

LION manes, 18 tawny-haired lion manes, have arrived at an exclusive London tailor shop.

They came from the King of Ethiopia, who instructed the tailor to sew the manes into a magnificent headdress which he wishes to wear at his coronation as Emperor of Ethiopia (Abyssinia).

Lions have always been the symbol of the rulers of Ethiopia. Baby lions are permitted to play around the carpeted steps leading up to the throne. "Conquering Lion of Judah" is one of the names which every Ethiopian emperor adopts.

Ras Taffari Became King at 24

Ras Taffari, now king, and soon to be crowned emperor, has been the real ruler of Ethiopia since he was twenty-four years old. He conducted the affairs of government for Zauditu, widow of the former Emperor, who died in 1918.

Ras Taffari Makonnen, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., LL.D., a bearded man with a grander mustache than Kaiser Wilhelm ever cultivated, is now thirty-seven. He is of medium height, his skin is no darker than that of many natives of Spain, and he has the poise of a general. A silent man, he rules with the fewest possible spoken words.

Although his royal robes for state occasions are heavy with glittering gold, Ras Taffari's every-day costume is simple and plain. He wears the costume of his fellow countrymen, a white cloth toga, and white trousers that fit almost as tightly as puttees around his legs, plus a heavy, dark, voluminous opera cape fastened with frogs, and a derby hat.

When visiting Europe in 1924 on the first tour any Abyssinian monarch ever made out of the country, he viewed the marvels of Western civilization with inscrutable calm. Every new experience he greeted with an impassive face. Only once, it is recorded, did he break through his natural manner. When he saw carp swimming in a French park pool he laughed.

A King That Works Fourteen Hours a Day

Ethiopia's King is married and lives in a spacious house at Addis Ababa, the capital. Two sons and three daughters have been born to the ruler and his wife, and he takes great interest in his children. Recently he bought one of them a tricycle. Occasionally the children are permitted to see motion pictures. Ras Taffari enjoys motion pictures and often shows guests films with his private projector. He likes to drive his own car.

After Menelik II defeated the Italians at Adua, Ras Taffari's father, who was a district chief, was sent on a mission to Europe. This experience led to Ras Taffari's education by French tutors. His ability to speak French as readily as he speaks Amharic, the native tongue, has aided him greatly in the difficult diplomatic maneuvers that have accompanied Ethiopia's national progress and her entrance into the League of Nations.

Being king in Europe and being king in Ethiopia are two different tasks. Ras Taffari combines the usual duties of rulership with the additional work of

armored, clumsy rhinoceros, they seem to belong to another older age. In place of ordinary fish scales the sturgeon has cartilaginous plates for a coat, some plates being capped with spikes. His mouth, like the shark's, is underslung, but, unlike the shark's, is toothless.

Another product of the sturgeon is isinglass, which is the gelatinous wall of the swimming bladder. Many fishes yield isinglass but the best qualities come from sturgeons. Isinglass is used to clarify wines and beers; to make jellies jell; to give luster to silk; to add to Spanish licorice, lamp black and water to make an India ink; to make "court plaster"; and, when dissolved in alcohol, to make a hard, durable glue to cement diamonds and repair broken glass and pottery.

Greece Imports More Caviar Than the United States

Although caviar has been a prized and expensive table delicacy certainly as far back as the days of Shakespeare, who made Hamlet say, "'Twas caviare to the general," wealthy America is not the chief importer of Astrakhan caviar. Greece annually surpasses the United States in importations of the roe.

The United States itself used to export caviar, but that was in the days when sturgeons were still plentiful in the Great Lakes and were found in considerable numbers in the rivers of the Atlantic and Pacific coast. Over-fishing has seriously depleted our sturgeon fisheries.

Caviar is but one item in the Soviet's extensive fisheries, which are estimated to be the third most valuable in the world. Russians used to consume large quantites of fish because of the numerous church fast days. The Baltic is rich in fish; the White Sea and the Murman coast are the home of cod and many other fish in addition to seal herds which are hunted annually; the numerous lakes yield their annual quota; the fishery resources of the Siberian rivers have been scarcely tapped, while the salmon streams of the Pacific coast have not been exploited nearly as effectively nor as scientifically as the Alaskan salmon streams.

Bulletin No. 2, October 20, 1930.

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A SOURCE OF RUSSIAN CAVIAR

Fishermen bring huge sturgeons to the fish wharves of Astrakhan on the lower Volga River. From the fish they remove large quantities of eggs, which are preserved and exported. No delicatessen in the United States is without a few cans of Russian caviar.

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Mayan Revival Stirs Yucatan

ARE the Mayas making a come-back?

Events in the Peninsula of Yucatan, whose surface is strewn with magnificent Maya monuments, hint a revival of the Indian culture destroyed by the Spanish conquest.

The Maya language is spoken widely now throughout the peninsula.

The governor of the State of Yucatan is a Maya Indian.

Waves of applause greeted a twenty-minute speech in Maya delivered recently during the governor's inauguration.

Maya actors have revived an ancient native musical play for presentation in the spacious plaza of Chichen Itza, which was the holy city of Maya civilization for centuries.

Maya Elements Survive in Place Names, Language and Dances

The Mayan Indians had the foremost civilization in America before Columbus discovered the New World. When parts of Europe were barbarous lands the Mayans were building great cities of stone and stucco structures. They had formulated a working system of astronomy and developed a system of writing, mainly a picture writing, but containing phonetic elements. They cast copper and gold and spun and wove cotton which was dyed with brilliant colors. Their calendar, which divided the year into eighteen months with five nameless days left over each year, was more nearly accurate than the Julian calendar.

Although this ancient civilization has vanished except for its ruins, it has left its impress on the native of to-day. Yucatan teems with place names entirely unchanged from their ancient designation. The Indian dances contain postures like those pictured on the carvings of ruined temples. Mayan is spoken as much as Spanish. Many of its words baffle the ordinary student of pronunciation. Examples are *huehuetl* meaning drum; *xtoles* which means dancers, and *h'men*, sorcerer.

New and Old Dress Styles to Be Seen

The pure Mayan types are seldom found now except in the jungles of the south or little known Quintana Roo. The Yucatecos have a passion for cleanliness. They resemble the Japanese in their devotion to the daily bath.

Modern Yucatan is prosperous. The raising of henequen, from which binder twine is manufactured, has made it so. This twine is used chiefly in the United States to bind up shocks of wheat and other grains. Merida, the capital of the Province of Yucatan, is a clean, colorful city.

The Meridanos themselves offer colorful contrasts. Parisian gowns are seen side by side with the old-fashioned *huipil* and *pik*, the white, square-necked overblouse and long underskirt formerly decreed by law for the Indians and Mestizas. Descendants of Mayas, once nobles of ancient Mayapan, ride through the streets in trim little Fords, which they call "Fotingos."

Innumerable bootblacks swarm the city. "Shines" may be had for the equivalent of 50 cents. Prices for everything are correspondingly high. Money is plentiful in Merida, as the numerous hotels, restaurants and clubs testify. The two-gun guerrilla of story-book fame is not to be found in Yucatan. The carrying of firearms is forbidden by law.

high priest, chief justice, commander-in-chief of the army, foreign minister, and head of the interior department, to mention a few of his jobs. While he has a cabinet, most of the work falls on his own shoulders, so his normal working day begins at 6 o'clock in the morning and ends about 10 o'clock at night.

Wants to Write Biography of Abyssinian Saints

No Abyssinian may be hung without the King's approval of the sentence; no contract, such as the recent one with American engineers to build a great dam at Lake Tsana, can go through unless he reads the text and signs the papers. And, according to the custom of the country, any citizen may demand a personal audience with the King.

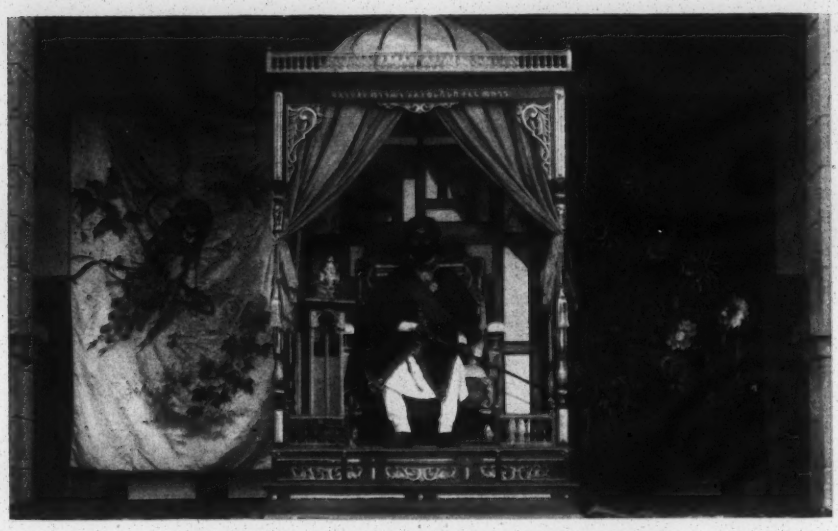
Ten million subjects in a land as large as the United States east of the Alleghenies swear fealty to Ras Taffari. Most of them are Christians, Coptic Christians, with an ancient, well-developed creed and a church organization that is independent of other Christian sects. One of the King's cherished ambitions is to write the biography of such Abyssinian saints as St. George and St. Michael.

Ruler Introduces Western Ways to a Feudal Society

Not content with the sufficiently grave responsibility of ruling Ethiopia, the King has dedicated his life to reforming his people. He pours the elixir of western ways down their throats as fast as he thinks they can take the medicine. Most of Ethiopia is still in the feudal age with chiefs and fighting men and serfs. Ras Taffari, like Henry II of England, makes his noblemen toe the mark of progress.

Gradually he is opening up one of the richest regions of Africa. New roads are being made, schools and hospitals have been erected, and a modern telegraph and telephone system extended. In his own palace the King has established a printing press, Ethiopia's only book bindery and a model dairy.

Bulletin No. 3, October 20, 1930.



RAS TAFFARI, KING OF ETHIOPIA, ON HIS THRONE

The ruler of Abyssinia will soon be crowned emperor and great preparations are being made at the capital, Addis Ababa, for an impressive ceremony. When an American diplomat, on leaving Ethiopia for a visit to the United States, asked the King whether there was anything he could bring him from America, Ras Taffari replied he would like some canned fruit.

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Changsha: The Fireworks City

CHANGSHA, China, has been suffering from repeated raids of Chinese Communist forces that have exacted tribute from its wealthy citizens and burned hundreds of homes and shops.

Changsha is a city of fireworks. The Fourth of July firecrackers used by the American small boy before the "Safe and Sane Fourth" was so widely enforced were imported heavily from Changsha.

The city is the capital of the hilly province of Hunan, important because it contains enormous coal fields, and because in it, to the north of Changsha, is the huge lake, Tung-ting hu, which acts as a reservoir for the Yangtze floods.

Wheelbarrows Designed to Climb Stairs

Among Changsha's most interesting sights are the wheelbarrows that climb stairs. Some distance ahead of the regulation wheel there is another smaller one. In climbing over flagstone steps or bridges, the handles of the wheelbarrow are lowered until the little front wheel rises above the next higher step. The wheelbarrow, which often carries 300 to 400 pounds, is see-sawed from wheel to wheel until the next level stretch of flagstones is attained.

In Hunan, the fortune teller has exerted much power and Changsha was so well protected by the lucky stars under which it was founded and by the Holy Hill which guards it that it formerly was thought an evil thing for the "foreign devil" Europeans and Americans to enter. In 1910 there were serious riots, mainly directed against the growing commercial power of foreign firms, but the disturbance was also linked with the heavens, because it was the approach of Halley's comet which touched off the explosion.

Yale in China Located at Changsha

Today Changsha is closely linked with New Haven, Connecticut, for there is, just outside the rapidly disappearing wall, in which the inhabitants once took great pride, one of the best known mission schools in China, which is Yale's contribution to the education of the Chinese who cannot come to America.

A large part of Hunan is an unworked field of anthracite and bituminous coal, and at Pinghsiang, which is connected with Changsha by railroad, there is one of the mines which furnishes fuel for the important Chinese iron works at Hanyang on the Yangtze.

Among the famous men of Changsha the most notable was General Tseng Kuo Fan, whose cooperation with "Chinese Gordon" was largely instrumental in putting down the Taiping rebellion. General Tseng was not only a soldier and statesman but a literary man as well, and his collected works number 156 books.

Changsha lies on a projected line of railway between Peiping (Peking) and Canton; and trains have already competed with the light-draft steamers which make the 220-mile trip from Hankow. The city had 500,000 inhabitants before the recent raids and is one of the cleanest cities in China.

Many of the streets are long and straight. The bazaars are full of life and interest and some of the bazaar candies have won a trade name on their merits throughout this section of China.

© Photograph from the Carnegie Institution

A MODERN MAYA MAIDEN IN AN OLD-FASHIONED DRESS

She wears the typical dress of the Maya woman, the *huipil*, a sleeveless garment beautifully embroidered in old-fashioned cross-stitch around the neck and the bottom, and a lace-edged underskirt. Slippers, a colored scarf, and a bow of ribbon for the hair complete the costume. Theresa has embroidered the Spanish word for love, "amor," on her huipil.

Note: For additional material and illustrations see the National Geographic Magazine: "Chichen Itza, an Ancient American Mecca," January, 1925; and "The Home of a Forgotten Race," June, 1914.

The Episcopal Mission has a live Boy Scout troop, and the visitor who watches tent-pegging, fire rescue, stretcher making and other Boy Scout activities marvels at China's quick changes.

Bulletin No. 5, October 20, 1930.

© Photograph by J. T. McGarvey

A HEAVILY LOADED 2-MAN WHEELBARROW IN CHINA

For adaptability to the worst road conditions no vehicle equals the wheelbarrow, and none is more used in China except the carrying pole. Nearly the whole load is balanced on a high, massive wheel with a broad tire. A shoulder-band from the handles of the barrow relieves the strain on the hands. When the wind is favorable, it is not unusual to hoist a sail to gain propelling power.

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